

Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2007
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe,
log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org
and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org
and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to
subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the
following sites:

<http://people.delphiforums.com/dpj/a-one.htm>
Now available:
<http://www.atarinews.org>

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
<http://forums.delphiforums.com/atari/>

=~::~~::~~

~ Gaming Rivals Team Up! ~ Most Asian E-mail Spam ~ US: Malware Capital?
~ Web Fraud Rampant In UK ~ Legit Users Headaches! ~ New Zero-Day Warning!

-* Vista Sales Double Vista Pace *-
-* Yahoo Offers Unlimited E-mail Space *-
-* Many Americans See Little Use for the Web! *-

=~==~==

->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

I'm going to tell you right up front, this is going to be a very quick editorial this week. And, Joe and I need to stop thinking on the same track! The calendar says it's Spring, and I made it official earlier today. The sun was out, and the temperature was rising. So, I decided to take a ride out to my local golf course and play a short round if the course looked in good shape. It did, and I did. The season is still very early, so there were no riding carts to use. So, I had my pull cart with me and was relegated to walking the course.

I have to say, the winter months haven't been good for my physical condition!! I've gained a few pounds over the winter, and certainly haven't exercised very much. I'm definitely out of shape, and as a result, I was huffing and puffing for much of the day. And, the arms and legs are sore. Amazingly enough though, I played fairly well for the first time out this season. Not great, but not poorly. And now I'm hooked for another season.

So, while I try to get the kinks worked out and wonder how I ache in places I didn't know I could, let's get to the reason why we're all here, this week's issue of A-ONE.

Until next time...

=~==~==

PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. First of all, I'd like to thank those of you who have emailed me with opinions and leads to aid in my hunt for the perfect job. It's much appreciated.

Second of all, it seems that you don't need to be doing manual labor to cause yourself injury. I woke up this morning after having slept wrong, and now have a fairly painfully pulled muscle right smack-dab in the

middle of my back. So here I sit, with a hotpad against my aching back (for the moment, anyway... I alternate between hot and cold for things like this... I find that it keeps the irritation to a minimum).

I guess it's all part and parcel of getting older. Hey, I'm not saying that I LIKE the idea, just that I understand it.

Anyway, I don't know if you've had the need to look at the help-wanted ads lately, but it's really depressing. I mean, after you get finished discounting the 'paper hat' positions and the 'stuff envelopes at home' ads, there's precious little left out there.

Thank goodness there're places like monster.com, dice.com and careerbuilder.com out there. I haven't gotten any solid hits from them yet, but at least they show me that there ARE jobs out there worth having.

Of course, my plan WAS to take a temporary job at someplace like Circuit City... yeah, that's just the way my luck runs. If you're not familiar with their current little scheme, read this:
<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/business/20070329-9999-1n29circuit.html>

Yep, looks like the days of the robber-barons are back. Or did they never really go away? Perhaps it's just that, in the current political and business climate, they don't feel the need to rely on subtlety anymore.

You've probably heard me (or read me) rant about how the gulf between the haves and the have-nots is getting wider and wider, or about how we're being pacified and lulled into going along things that are, on their face, not in our best interests.

Well, I'm not going to mention anything more about it this week... you deserve a rest too, right? And that includes my hitting you over the head with my beliefs and such.

Don't get me wrong, I've still got lots to say and tons of opinions, but I'm content to bide my time. It's not important to me that everyone agree with me, just that they have access to information. And in this day and age, information is a commodity. The difference between information and other commodities (at least for the time-being) is that information is mostly free.

So, in keeping with that "mostly free" thought, let's tank up on some right now... My treat! [Grin]

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Derryck Croker asks about dealing with some old floppies:

"Is it possible to extract individual titles from Automation Menu disks, and, if so, what with and how?"

'RoyE' tells Derryck:

"This site has a converter that will allow extractions, but a lot of MSA DISKS have encryption (i.e) ICE, and will not run with out being decrypted.

Anyway the site is :
<http://msaconverter.free.fr/index-uk.html>

I would like to find a Windows based program that will decrypt ICE encryption."

Derryck tells Roy:

"The Automation disks are in .ST format. Best I can do with the utility you linked to is to delete files from the image. That leaves their entries in the menu screen.

Better than nothing, but there must be a utility out there, somewhere?"

Jerome Mathevet adds his craving for the same type of app:

"I take it that you want to run games from a hard disc, right? I'd love that too (The MSA dearchiver with decryption, that is). I found "file-based" cracked games on D-Bug's web site (which seems to be regularly updated). <http://www.dbug-automation.co.uk/falcon.htm> "

Mark Bedingfield jumps in and adds:

"Woa mama. Thats freaking awesome. Now what to do with my MegaSTE and Falcons..."

François Le Coat posts this about his new game machine:

"I got my brand new PlayStation 3 yesterday. I use it for the moment as a media centre, because it requires a HD display to install Linux (YDL 5.0 <<http://www.terrasoftsolutions.com/>>) and that my 20" 16/10 DELL screen has no HDCP decoding chip to handle High Definition. I'll probably have to get a VGA-Box to connect it, but all this is so fresh !

Looking at this for Linux:
<http://tinyurl.com/yv48k4> {URL converted by Editor}

I was wondering about great opportunity to port ARAnyM's VM on PS3. Somebody of us is interested in that challenge ? That really looks promising to me... My own conviction!

Feel free to comment. The French community is not enthusiastic."

Mickael Pointier tells François:

"Well, I think we were more objecting on the price/power ratio of this machine; specially when the idea is to run a virtual machine.

If an Atari emulator was spending it's time doing floating point operations, no doubt that the PS3 would be quite an efficient machine for that. But for running an emulation core, I fear that it will be less efficient than any standard desktop pc processor.

We will see.

I promised a bottle of champagne to François if he managed to run Arany on a PS3 showing benchmarks which indicate numbers superiors of what we would got on a similarly priced PC at the time of demonstration (similarly priced meaning "only the desktop unit, without counting the price of screen, keyboard, mouse, loudspeakers, etc... because they are not coming with the PS3 either). So well, this can be interesting to see."

François replies:

"PlayStation3 has a lot of different usages. I'm only discovering some of them."

'Dave' asks for help with HD Driver and a 100mb ZIP drive:

"Once HDDRIVER has recognized the ZIP drive do I just add an icon onto the Falcon's desktop.?"

Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver, tells Dave:

"Yes, just like you would with any other drive. In order for HDDRIVER (and not just HDDRUTIL) to find the drive ensure that HDDRIVER is configured to check the ZIP's SCSI ID. The manual provides details on how to configure which drive IDs should be checked."

Dave replies:

"Right, I've enabled 1.7 in the 'Devices & Partitions' box, the device check confirms that the ZIP is on bus 1 07.00 (is that the LUN?).

Now if I go into the ZIP/JAZ drives menu all I can see is the Toshiba IDE hard drive as before. Adding further desktop icons still does not allow access to the ZIP.

Just be be sure I'm doing everything there are a few points in the printed manual I could do with clarification on...

1.1.1 - There should be no HDDRIVER.PRG in the auto folder?

1.2 - This states that the program is installed to the root (boot) drive as hddriver.sys but then says if run from a floppy it needs to be .prg. Are .sys and .prg mutually exclusive?

Right, just had another scan through the manual and I think I've done everything correctly but nothing but nothing will allow this ZIP to be picked up."

Henk Robbers tells Dave:

"In your previous post it was bus 1 unit 6

Use HDRUTIL and perform a autoconfigure (rightmost menu title)

reset

Which OS do you use? if TOS, do Options->install devices
One of the icons should be your ZIP, probably the highest letter.
If you don't use TOS, I don't know, unless you use Mint/XaAES/Teradesk.
Factory formatted ZIP disc are not recognized by single TOS. For those you must use MiNT.

However, you can repartition ZIP media for use with single TOS. HDRUTIL is your friend."

Uwe adds:

"As Henk already pointed out, your device is 6.0, as displayed by the ID check, not 1.7.

.sys is used when booting from hard disk, .prg when booting from floppy (AUTO folder)."

Dave messes around with stuff and tells Henk and Uwe:

"Ok, success! It all works now and I can see the ZIP drive in all it's glory. Thanks for your advice!

Now I have a backup of the C:\ drive I'm going to install one of the MiNT distributions along with the free AES. What are people suggestions?

Also does anyone know where I can find an English install doc for the EasyMiNT or one of the simpler distributions?"

Paul Williamson asks about an HP printer to go with his Atari:

"Does anyone know if an hp business inkjet 1200d printer will work on an Atari? I need to replace the printer on my Hades, which I use in single TOS to print from Cubase Score, and also in MintNet to print from Papyrus.

The hp business inkjet 1200d has a parallel port as well as USB, but I don't know if the NVDI HP Deskjet 1200 colour driver will work with it (I use NVDI 5.01).

Alternatively - any other ideas for a good replacement printer with a parallel port - preferably one with a USB port as well?"

Everybody's favorite techie, Aly, tells Paul:

"This program just may be of interest..
<http://www.printcapture.com/>
It basically turns your PC into a serial printer. Captures the data from an ST or whatever, and turns it into a bitmap on the PC. I use it as it's easy."

Paul tells Aly:

"Thanks for the link. It looks an interesting way to do things, but I've ordered the printer now - and I'm keeping my fingers crossed in the hope

it will work."

Peter Schneider adds:

"I'm not really sure, but I suppose very strongly that the mentioned printer will **not** work with any - not emulated - Atari.

For last year I had to make some bad experience with a recent HP laser printer:

Trying to put out one single character (even ESC...) stopped my TT's TOS at once. Ok, inkjet is unequal to laser, but HP printers used to be compatible to one another. Sorry! But please do tell me if I'm wrong!"

David Wade adds his thoughts:

```
"It says it supports:-
'HP High Performance Architecture PCL3'
If this is the same as PCL3 then it should work fine....
```

Some recent HP Laser only support PCL6 which is not backwards compatible with PCL5
<http://www.csgnetwork.com/hppclhist.html>
 has some info but a google search on PCL6 and compatibility will yield many more.

They [HP printers] are not [compatible] anymore. PCL6 is not backwards compatible...."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

```
->In This Week's Gaming Section      - Two Gaming Rivals Team Up!
   " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "    Retirees Taking To Wii!
                                       Xbox 360 Gets Big HD!
                                       And much more!
```

$$= \sim = \sim = \sim =$$

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Gaming Rivals Team Up

Mario the plumber and Sonic the Hedgehog, rivals in the video game world for two decades, will team up for the first time in a game based on the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games, due in stores this holiday season for Nintendo's Wii console and DS handheld system (prices not yet set), will also include other popular characters such as Luigi and Yoshi (from Nintendo's Mario games), as well as Knuckles and Tails (from the Sonic games), all competing in such summer Olympic events as running, swimming and table tennis.

"This is something we've been talking about for two to three years now but never really had quite the right opportunity," says Simon Jeffery of Sega, which secured video game licenses for the upcoming summer games. "With (that), we started thinking of some way to take advantage of the Wii and DS, and then magic happened."

Rumors of a Mario-Sonic collaboration have been around since Sega quit making video game consoles itself in 2001. Back in 1991, Sega's release of Sonic the Hedgehog provided a much-needed power boost to the Sega Genesis system, then in hot combat with Nintendo.

By that time, Mario was well on his way to appearing in nearly 100 games and selling more than 193 million video games. He first appeared as "Jumpman" in 1981 in the arcade game Donkey Kong. Then in 1985, the game Super Mario Bros. helped fuel the success of the Nintendo Entertainment System and became the top-selling game of all time (40 million worldwide; some came bundled with the NES). That game is credited with helping the video game industry's resurgence after its crash several years earlier.

To catch the attention of the Sega Genesis' target market, a slightly older, edgier consumer, Sega's designers created Sonic with "attitude and speed, to kick things up a notch in the video game character wars," Jeffery says. Eventually, Sonic games sold more than 44 million worldwide and the character appeared in an animated TV series and comic books (Mario also had his own TV series for a time, and a 1993 live-action movie starring Bob Hoskins and Dennis Hopper bombed).

The new Olympics game, to be designed by Sega with oversight by Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto, will make unique use of the Wii's motion-sensitive controller. "It's going to be very interactive and fairly physical," says Jeffery, adding that more will be revealed in coming months.

Nintendo's Perrin Kaplan says the gameplay will involve "something that has not yet been imagined on Wii and DS."

This Nintendo-Sega collaboration is another coup for Nintendo, which has strengthened its hold on the handheld game market with the dual-screened DS and so far outdueled Sony's PlayStation 3 with the Wii.

At Wedbush Morgan Securities, Michael Pachter calls the game "a pretty big announcement" in that the two companies are teaming up on the game and Nintendo is sharing its intellectual property. "You are looking at a genre-widening partnership."

Wii Game Console Bowling Over Retirees

Until two weeks ago, Ruth Ebert never had the slightest interest in the video games favored by her one and only granddaughter.

"I'm 82 years old, so I missed that part of our culture. Soap operas, yes. Video games, no," chirped Ebert, who recently started playing a tennis game on Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s new Wii video game console at the Virginia retirement community she calls home.

"It was funny, because normally I would not be someone who would do that," said Ebert, who picked up the console's motion-sensing Wiimote and challenged the machine to a match.

"I played tennis, if you can call it that, as a high school student. I had such fun doing it," she said.

Ebert swung the Wiimote just like a tennis racquet and said playing the game reminded her of the feeling she had all those years ago.

While she took the early on-court lead, the Wii beat her in the end. Still, it hurt less than her real-world losses: "I didn't mind losing to a video game. It couldn't rub it in."

Japan's Nintendo has been on a mission to expand the \$30 billion global video game market far beyond the children and young males who make up its core consumers.

And the company, a former underdog best known for fun, high-quality games based on off-beat characters like plumbers - think Mario Bros. - has sent shock waves through game industry with the unexpected and runaway success of the Wii.

That \$250 console has been stealing the show from Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360 and Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3, higher-powered consoles that are much more expensive than the Wii.

While those rivals focused on cutting-edge graphics and high-tech bells and whistles, Nintendo focused on making game play easier, more intuitive and more appealing to a mass market.

That bet paid off.

The Wii outsold the new Microsoft and Sony consoles in January and February and is generating its own buzz with everyone from nuns to cancer patients to toddlers.

There are Wii parties and Wii bowling contests. Players, who often look quite silly and occasionally injure themselves in fits of overzealous play, upload video of their Wii antics to a variety of technology Web sites like GameTrailers.com and Google's YouTube.

"I thought it was tremendous," said Ted Campbell, 77.

Last week he played the Wii for the first time at Springfield, Virginia's Greenspring Retirement Community, where Ebert is also a resident.

The community hasn't yet decided where to keep the Wii, although Ebert has

volunteered her one-bedroom apartment, with its big-screen TV.

Flora Dierbach, 72, chairs the entertainment committee at a sister facility owned by Erickson Retirement Communities in Chicago and helped arrange a Wii bowling tournament - the latest Wii craze.

"It's a very social thing and it's good exercise ... and you don't have to throw a 16-pound (7.25-kg) bowling ball to get results," said Dierbach, who added the competition had people who hardly knew each other cheering and hugging in the span of a few hours.

"We just had a ball with it. You think it's your grandkids' game and it's not," she said, noting that Erickson paid for the Wiis in its facilities.

Greenspring resident and long-time bowler Sim Taylor said his grandchildren are also great fans of video games.

"I never could understand it," said Taylor, who at 81 has surprised himself by adding video games to his list of hobbies.

That isn't the case with Millicent, his wife of 55 years.

"She sticks with bridge," Taylor said.

'Tiger' Looking Fine On Nintendo's Wii

When the Nintendo Wii was released this past November, it became clear certain games would translate better than others to the Wii's motion-sensitive control scheme. The golf portion of "Wii Sports" - which comes bundled with the Wii - hinted at the possibilities of a breakthrough golf experience on the Wii, but control issues and its overall brevity limited it to little more than a mini-game.

Enter "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07" for the Wii. As the preeminent golf videogame from EA Sports, the "Tiger" franchise was destined to be a system seller for the Wii. While almost all other relevant golf games are cartoonish fantasies, "Tiger" features actual golf pros, authentic courses and sponsored equipment - it's a game golf enthusiasts can appreciate.

And by and large, the initial "Tiger" outing on Wii is a success. The Wii's controls allow players to grip their Wii Remote like a club and swing away. The days of pulling and pushing an analog stick are gone and seem archaic by the Wii's new standard.

The controls are not perfect. Unlike golf in "Wii Sports" which features 1-to-1 controls where every articulation of the Wii Remote is translated on-screen, "Tiger" registers movements from the controller but not in a 1-to-1 manner. Instead, bringing the controller backward begins and completes the player's backswing, regardless if the controller is brought back all the way. Controller speed and direction is translated by the system, but once the on-screen character completes their backswing it's impossible to strike the ball at less than 75 percent. The only way to hit the ball lightly is to quickly swing the controller forward during the onscreen player's backswing. It's a little awkward at first, but it can be mastered within a few rounds

In addition to the basic swing mechanics, the angle with which the controller is held and manipulated during the swing results in hooks and slices in the game. If you have a natural slice in real life, chances are you will in the game, too, but it can be counteracted relatively easily.

Like other "Tiger" games, ball spin can be applied while the ball is in the air. To do this on the Wii you simply select the spin direction you want on the d-pad and shake the controller. It's definitely not the most realistic aspect of the game, but it allows players to correct errant shots.

While putting was an issue with "Wii Sports" golf, it's a breeze in "Tiger." Practice swings allow the player to gauge the power necessary for sinking a shot and breaks in the green are clearly displayed.

As far as game modes go, "Tiger" has a lot to offer. Everything from a full-on PGA Tour mode with a custom character, to quick 9-hole rounds and arcade games involving shooting balls through hoops is included. The only thing the game is missing is online play - but so is every other Wii game to date.

Visually the game is far from pretty and appears to be a straight port from the previously released Gamecube version of the game. But after a few minutes of play, gamers won't notice the poor graphics at all. The gameplay is so immersive and just plain fun that the dated visuals won't even cross your mind.

Ultimately that's the beauty of the Wii and "Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07;" the gameplay is a blast. The controls may not be perfect and the graphics may be unstylish, but you will not find a game as fun as "Tiger 07" on Wii.

Microsoft To Sell Xbox 360 With Larger Hard Drive

Microsoft Corp. said on Tuesday it will begin selling a new version of its Xbox 360 console that transmits high-definition video and comes with a larger hard drive in its latest effort to position the video game machine as a digital media hub.

Microsoft's new Xbox 360 Elite, with a 120-gigabyte hard drive and High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) port, will be available on April 29 in the United States and Canada for \$479.99.

The hard drive on the new machine is six times bigger than the current high-end Xbox 360 model, which retails for \$399.

Microsoft said the Elite hard drive has space to hold a library of arcade games and thousands of songs, as well as high-definition TV shows and movies downloaded from the company's Xbox LIVE online service.

"Today's games and entertainment enthusiast has an insatiable appetite for digital high-definition content," said Peter Moore, corporate vice president for the Interactive Entertainment Business at Microsoft.

Microsoft said it will sell the Elite alongside existing Xbox 360 systems and it will offer the detachable 120 gigabyte hard drive for \$179.99.

Microsoft released the Xbox 360 a full year ahead of Sony Corp.'s new

PlayStation 3 and Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s Wii, grabbing an early lead in the new, three-way video game console war.

The Xbox 360 and PS3 are also battling on the home entertainment front with each shooting to take control of the digital living room.

Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter said Microsoft is making a play for a niche market.

"Very few consumers will care," he said, noting that most gamers can probably get by with a 20-gigabyte hard drive while owners of pricey high-definition televisions are still a small percentage of the overall audience.

Sony's PS3 includes a next-generation, high-definition, Blu-ray DVD player that is slowly gaining popularity with movie buffs. Microsoft did not put a competing high-def DVD player in its console, but with the Elite, the world's biggest software maker is making its own assault on the living room.

Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates said earlier this year it would offer an Xbox 360 that would double as a set-top box for Internet Protocol TV, or IPTV. Telephone carriers and cable companies provide set-top boxes to pipe high-definition movies and television into homes.

Executives at Sony, whose \$600 high-end PS3 has racked up fewer sales than the Xbox 360 and Wii, said Microsoft's new console does not seem to address any consumer need.

"We're scratching our heads. They're fragmenting their product offering and fragmenting their consumer base," said Peter Dille, a Sony Computer Entertainment America senior vice president of marketing, who said Sony has no current plans to increase the size of its 60 gigabyte hard drive.

New Site Aims To Be The YouTube of Gaming

When video game maker Jim Greer approached Silicon Valley investors to give him nearly \$1 million for his start-up, he had an irresistible pitch: "It's video games meets YouTube."

He named the site Kongregate.com and last June began inviting game developers and players to test it. After Christmas he opened the site to users of all stripes, who can submit and play games free of charge.

So far, the advertising-supported site at www.kongregate.com offers 300 games that are rated by players, who chat online as they play.

"Not all of them are gems, but the top 100 are," said Greer, 36, who founded the company with his younger sister Emily, 32, and offers game makers a share of the site's advertising revenue.

Reid Hoffman, founder of business networking site LinkedIn and a former PayPal executive, said timing played a big role in his decision to become an investor in the company.

Adobe Systems Inc.'s Flash software, which is used to make those Web ads that wiggle and shake, has made it easy for developers to quickly churn

out fun games. At the same time, advances in Web technology have spurred all kinds of new ways to rate and share information online.

"If you get thousands of people creating content, really interesting things emerge," said Hoffman, an occasional gamer who said that while 70 percent of amateur games tend to be stinkers, about 10 percent are great.

Greer, 36, is not new to the \$30 billion global business.

He started making games on his Apple II computer when he was 12 and his first job was at Origin Systems, where he worked on several iterations of the company's "Ultima" games.

Greer was most recently technical director at Electronic Arts Inc.'s Pogo.com Web site, where more than 14 million mostly middle-aged females play word, puzzle and card games monthly.

Kongregate debuted amid rising interest in independent games. Developers have more avenues than ever to distribute their such products - from Shockwave.com and AddictingGames.com to new entrants like Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox Live Arcade online game service.

Rival console makers Nintendo Co. Ltd. and Sony Corp. are also preparing to launch their own indie game outlets.

Alabama college student Brad Borne, 21, made "The Fancy Pants Adventures," a "goofy and cartoony" offering that's one of the top-ranked titles on Kongregate.

The easy-to-play and addictive game stars a stick figure in big yellow pants.

Borne said he made his first full game "SnowBlitz" when he was 19. He has lots of other ideas percolating, is working on a follow-up to "Fancy Pants" and is a Flash game programmer for hire.

He said his daily share of advertising revenues from Kongregate is about \$2 a day - which he expects to go higher as traffic grows - and is a big fan of the site's live chat.

"It puts a name and a personality behind your audience. It does the same thing for developers," said Borne, who said players have given him good ideas for the his "Fancy Pants" sequel, which he's testing on Kongregate.

He hopes one day the experience will take his career to a new level, but said he has something else to finish first.

"I'm just taking it one step at a time. After college I'll see what I can do with it," he said.

Experts: Take-Two Coup A Governance Win

The shareholder uprising that threw out nearly the entire board of Take-Two Interactive Software Inc. was a victory for investors who are fighting for new leadership at troubled companies, corporate governance experts said Friday.

The upheaval at the publisher of "Grand Theft Auto" and other video games culminated Thursday with the election of a new chairman, the appointment of new directors and the ouster of the CEO.

Experts marveled at the swiftness of the coup, saying it reflects the growing sense of cooperation among disgruntled shareholders looking to dispatch with embattled corporate leaders.

Grievances with a public company's board are typically fought in drawn-out proxy battles that can be costly and frustrating even for large shareholders.

But the Take-Two revolt took less than a month to pull off.

It started earlier this month when a group of large shareholders mounted a public campaign to weed out directors they blamed for the company's financial woes and ethical lapses. The final vote tally was revealed Thursday, shortly after the game maker's annual meeting in New York.

"Institutional shareholders are much more aware now, and they're much more organized; they're not acting as lone wolves anymore," said Eleanor Bloxham, president of The Value Alliance and Corporate Governance Alliance in Westerville, Ohio. "And when a company has lost its way, like Take-Two obviously has, they're willing to come together and make something happen."

A spate of corporate scandals has spurred investors to push for ways to make it easier to replace board members, but such efforts don't always work out.

Earlier this month, for example, Hewlett-Packard Co. shareholders voted down a proposal that would have changed the company's bylaws to allow investors to nominate directors. The proposal was pitched as a way to ensure director accountability after the boardroom spying fiasco involving former Chairwoman Patricia Dunn and several senior HP employees.

HP opposed the changes, as did some of the company's biggest stockholders, and the measure failed.

The situation at Take-Two also had unique characteristics:

- o The investor group that spearheaded the revolt controls nearly half of the company's shares. At most public companies, even large investors usually control only a small fraction of shares.
- o A former Take-Two executive carries the dubious distinction of being the first chief executive to be convicted of backdating stock options. Ryan A. Brant, the company's former chairman and CEO, pleaded guilty in February to first-degree falsification of business records.

Still, the takeover sends a message to directors of other companies that their jobs are in jeopardy if they lose sight of their commitment to shareholders, said B. Espen Eckbo, the founding director of the Center for Corporate Governance at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College.

The company's underlying financial troubles have rankled investors and were major reasons behind the push for a change at the top.

Despite having a lineup of top-selling games, Take-Two, one of the world's biggest video game publishers, lost nearly \$185 million last

fiscal year while rivals Activision Inc., THQ Inc. and top-selling Electronic Arts Inc. all managed to post healthy profits.

"The pendulum is swinging in the U.S. toward more hiring and firing of directors; the board is being held to a higher standard as we go forward than ever before," Eckbo said. "Boards are literally being re-educated about what their jobs are."

Still, Take-Two's stock price rose more than 13 percent from last year until Thursday.

The stock lost 96 cents, or more than 4.5 percent, to close at \$20.14 in Friday trading on the Nasdaq Stock Market on concerns that the new directors didn't offer enough guidance on how they intend to turn the company around.

Michael Pachter, a research analyst at investment banking and brokerage firm Wedbush Morgan Securities, said he was unimpressed with the appointment of an acting CEO instead of a permanent one and the board's lack of clarity on how to return the company to profitability.

"I thought they would have identified someone right away," he said. "And I was a little surprised that they said they would have a strategy in 3 to 6 months. It's probably unfair to expect that the dissident shareholder group could pull something together this fast, have a strategy ready and move on, but certainly that was the implication."

=~==~==

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Many Americans See Little Point To Web

A little under one-third of U.S. households have no Internet access and do not plan to get it, with most of the holdouts seeing little use for it in their lives, according to a survey released Friday.

Park Associates, a Dallas-based technology market research firm, said 29 percent of U.S. households, or 31 million homes, do not have Internet access and do not intend to subscribe to an Internet service over the next 12 months.

The second annual National Technology Scan conducted by Park found the main reason potential customers say they do not subscribe to the Internet is because of the low value to their daily lives they perceive rather than concerns over cost.

Forty-four percent of these households say they are not interested in anything on the Internet, versus just 22 percent who say they cannot afford a computer or the cost of Internet service, the survey showed.

The answer "I'm not sure how to use the Internet" came from 17 percent of participants who do not subscribe. The response "I do all my e-commerce shopping and YouTube-watching at work" was cited by 14 percent of Internet-access refuseniks. Three percent said the Internet doesn't reach their homes.

The study found U.S. broadband adoption grew to 52 percent over 2006, up from 42 percent in 2005. Roughly half of new subscribers converted from slower-speed, dial-up Internet access while the other half of households had no prior access.

"The industry continues to chip away at the core of nonsubscribers, but has a ways to go," said John Barrett, director of research at Parks Associates.

"Entertainment applications will be the key. If anything will pull in the holdouts, it's going to be applications that make the Internet more akin to pay TV," he predicted.

Microsoft Says Vista Sales Doubling Windows XP Pace

Microsoft Corp. said on Monday that it sold more than 20 million Windows Vista licenses in the first month since the operating system's general debut on January 30.

The world's biggest software maker said the pace of Vista adoption is at more than twice the rate of its predecessor, Windows XP, which had sold 17 million licenses after its first two months of release.

"It's a little bit better than what we were expecting," said Bill Mannion, a director in the Windows marketing group.

The numbers released by Microsoft follow mixed messages from the company about the pace of adoption for Windows Vista, the company's first major operating system upgrade in more than five years.

Prior to Vista's general release, Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer had predicted that consumers would move to Vista faster than past Windows upgrades.

However, several weeks after the release, Ballmer tempered expectations by saying analysts' forecasts for revenue from Windows Vista in fiscal 2008 - Microsoft's next business year starting in July - were "overly aggressive."

Microsoft said it was surprised by how many Vista customers were choosing to buy the premium, or more expensive, versions of Vista. The sales figures represent licenses sold to computer manufacturers, copies of upgrades and boxed software sold to retailers.

Also, more retailers were stocking computers loaded with the premium versions of the operating system, which comes with the "Media Center" digital entertainment system.

The Windows franchise is the centerpiece of Microsoft's business, because the company makes more than 75 cents in operating profit for every dollar of sales. The cash flow generated by Windows allows Microsoft to make

investments in new businesses like digital music players and online services.

Windows operating systems run on more than 95 percent of the world's computers and represent the company's biggest profit driver.

Yahoo To Offer Unlimited E-mail Storage

Yahoo Inc. plans to offer unlimited e-mail storage to its roughly quarter of a billion users, starting in May, it said on Tuesday.

The world's biggest e-mail service is scrapping its free e-mail storage limit of 1 gigabyte, or about a billion bytes of data, responding to explosive growth in attachment sizes as people share ever more photos, music and videos via e-mail.

Microsoft has a 2 gigabyte free e-mail storage limit, while Google caps its Gmail service at 2.8 gigabytes.

"We are giving them no reason to ever have to delete old e-mails," Yahoo co-founder David Filo said in a phone interview. "You can keep stuff forever."

Officials said the decision to remove e-mail storage limits reflects the plunging cost of storage as new personal computers store up to a trillion bytes of data and owners of 80-gigabyte iPods can carry 100 hours of video in their pockets.

By contrast, when Yahoo first introduced its e-mail service a little under a decade ago, it capped individual storage at 4 megabytes per user. At that time, an "ultra high-density" floppy disk for personal computers then held 144 megabytes.

"People should think about e-mail as something where they are archiving their lives," said Filo, who remains active in managing technical operations at the Sunnyvale, California, company and carries the honorific title of Chief Yahoo.

Starting in May, the changeover to unlimited storage should take a month, said John Kremer, vice president of Yahoo Mail.

"We have been closely monitoring average usage. We are comfortable that our users are far under 1 gig(abyte), on average," Kremer said by phone. "What we see are an increasing number of rich media files as consumers send more photos."

One caveat Yahoo makes is that the offer is for personal use and subject to guidelines against abuse that apply to Yahoo Mail. No one can build a business giving away unlimited storage to other consumers using Yahoo Mail, executives said.

Two countries - China and Japan - are excluded. "We will continue working with these markets on their storage plans," Kremer said in a statement. Yahoo is a minority owner with partner Softbank in Yahoo Japan Corp. and a part owner with Alibaba of the Yahoo business in China.

Filo said Yahoo is looking at lifting caps on storage for other services

such as its Flickr photo-sharing service. "We are looking at those on a case-by-case basis," he said.

It's a far cry from when giving away 2 megabytes of data was considered a big deal, said David Nakayama, Yahoo's group vice president of engineering and developer of RocketMail, which Yahoo acquired and relaunched as Yahoo Mail in 1997.

In a posting to Yahoo's corporate blog, he said capacity when Yahoo Mail started was 200 gigabytes for all customers.

"I remember getting in a room to plan our RocketMail launch over a decade ago and worrying that our original plan of a 2 megabyte quota wasn't enough, and that we needed to be radical and DOUBLE the storage to 4 megabyte per account!" he wrote.

Almost 70 Percent Of All Email From Asia Is Spam

Almost 70 percent of all electronic mail from Asia is "spam", or unsolicited advertisements, an anti-virus firm said Friday.

The Philippines had the worst record with spam making up 88 percent of all emails, Symantec Corp. said in excerpts of its Internet Threat Security Report released here.

The average percentage of emails sent from the Asia-Pacific region that were spam was 69 percent, the report added.

Although the Philippines had the highest proportion of spam, China was the largest source of spam by sheer volume, the report said.

Thirty-seven percent of all spam detected from Asia-Pacific originated from China.

Symantec said in a statement that it could not provide the total number of e-mails monitored but that the results was based on data from over two million "decoy accounts" attracting email from 20 different countries.

It also uses a statistical sampling of networks used by Symantec's customers, the statement said.

Virus Disguised as IE 7 Download

If you receive an e-mail offering a download of Internet Explorer 7 Beta 2, delete it. A new virus is making the rounds that comes disguised as a test version of Microsoft Corp. current Web browser.

Security experts reported no widespread damage Friday morning, but they said the virus is notable for a couple of reasons. The e-mail includes a convincing graphic that looks like it could really be from Microsoft, and the virus is delivered when recipients click on a link rather than in an attachment, which makes it harder to stop it from reaching in-boxes.

"The idea of sending a link seems to be a trend among attackers; it's

still fairly new and it works much better than sending a file," said Mikko Hypponen, chief research officer at F-Secure Corp.

The e-mails carry the subject line "Internet Explorer 7 Downloads" and appear to come from admin@microsoft.com. They include a blue, Microsoft-style graphic offering a download of IE 7 beta 2. Clicking the graphic will download an executable file called IE 7.exe.

The file is actually a new virus called Virus.Win32.Grwm.A, and security experts were still analyzing it Friday to see what it does. Sophos PLC said it can spread by e-mailing itself to contacts in a user's address book. The virus tampers with registry files to ensure it gets installed, and it tries to download additional files from the Internet, said Graham Cluley, a senior technology consultant for Sophos.

Other specifics were unknown yet, but such viruses often install a keystroke logger to steal personal information, and establish a network of infected computers to launch a denial of service attack, Cluley said.

"We don't know anything yet about where it is coming from," Hypponen said. "It's fairly well made and hard to analyze with normal tools."

F-Secure had received many reports of the e-mail but few submissions of the virus itself, indicating that damage so far is limited. Cluley agreed: "I wouldn't classify this as one of the biggest viruses of the year, but that doesn't mean it isn't a threat" he said.

Detection of Win32.Grwm by antivirus programs was "mediocre" on Thursday evening, according to Sunbelt Software Inc., and some big vendors were still not picking it up Friday morning, Hypponen said.

F-Secure and Sophos are blocking the virus and all major vendors are likely to do so soon, he said. Some e-mail filtering systems were also not blocking the virus on Friday morning.

The virus is being hosted on several servers around the world, which will increase the time it takes to identify and clean them all. They appear to be Web servers that have been hacked, Hypponen said. The SANS Internet Storm Center asked administrators to check their logs to make sure they are not hosting the file.

The virus affects only Windows users. "Microsoft is aware of this issue and is currently investigating this matter, including customer impact," a spokeswoman said via e-mail.

The final version of IE 7 was released last October, so Microsoft is unlikely to be advertising a beta of the product. Users can download a real version of the software at Microsoft's Internet Explorer home page.

Microsoft Warns of New Zero-Day Exploit

On Thursday, Microsoft warned that hackers are actively exploiting a zero-day vulnerability in animated cursor, or .ANI, files for Windows. Some security researchers are comparing it to last year's widespread Windows Metafile (WMF) attacks.

Users of most supported versions of Windows and Windows Server,

including Vista, are at risk of attackers taking complete control of their system. However, Microsoft offered a silver lining: Users running Windows Vista and Internet Explorer 7 in protect mode should be safe because the security feature doesn't allow files to access or modify any system files without user permission.

"In order for this attack to be carried out, a user must either visit a Web site that contains a Web page that is used to exploit the vulnerability or view a specially crafted e-mail message or e-mail attachment sent to them by an attacker," Adrian Stone from Microsoft's Security Response Center, wrote in an official advisory.

Microsoft is reporting very limited attacks against the newly reported vulnerability in the way Windows handles animated cursor files. Nonetheless, some security researchers believe the new ANI exploit has similar potential to last year's WMF attacks, which rank among the most dangerous and widely exploited vulnerabilities since the Zobot worms of 2005.

Security researchers are scrambling to gather information on the breadth of the risk. Ken Dunham, director of VeriSign iDefense's Rapid Response Team, worked late into Thursday night to collect data on the latest Windows zero-day threat.

"iDefense has confirmed active exploitation of the new ANI exploit in the wild," Dunham reported. "Multiple domains point back to two different hostile servers at this time." There is no known e-mail or file vector exploits in the wild to date, he added, but e-mail possibilities are being researched. In short, Dunham said iDefense has proven that, with few modifications, file execution is possible through the exploit.

Meanwhile, Craig Schmugar, researcher for McAfee Avert Labs, tested the Vista vulnerability and posted a video of the ramifications of the attack on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=hf0S0Vk7j6I. "In the process of setting up the environment, I dragged and dropped a malicious ANI file to the desktop," he wrote in the McAfee Avert Labs blog. "This causes Vista to enter an endless crash-restart loop."

At the time of this writing, mitigation data remains mostly unproved. However, Dunham said unconfirmed data suggests that configuring e-mail clients for plain text might help mitigate the primary vector of initial attacks, though not the vulnerability itself. In addition, he said, blocking all types of e-mail attachments might be required to trap any ANI files that might be disguised within other file types, such as JPEG.

Another security firm, eEye Digital, released a workaround for the zero-day vulnerability as a temporary measure for Microsoft customers. However, the company said the workaround is not meant to replace the forthcoming Microsoft patch.

"The temporary patch aims to mitigate the vulnerability by preventing cursors from being loaded outside of the SystemRoot," the company said in a statement. "This disallows Web sites from loading their own, potentially malicious animated icons, while causing little to no business disruption on hosts with the patch installed."

For its part, Microsoft said it has added detection to the Windows Live OneCare safety scanner for up-to-date removal of malicious software that attempts to exploit this vulnerability. The software giant said it will continue to investigate the issue.

E-mail Users Want More Control Of Inboxes

Bombarded by spam, e-mail users are eager for tools like a "report fraud" button that would help weed out unwanted messages that litter inboxes, according to a survey by the Email Sender and Provider Coalition released on Tuesday.

More than 80 percent of e-mailers already use tools such as "report spam" and the "unsubscribe" button to manage their in-boxes, the survey found.

The survey, which was also conducted by marketing research firm Ispos, polled 2,252 Internet users who access e-mail through service providers such as AOL, MSN/Hotmail, Yahoo! and Gmail.

"The direct engagement of consumers has game-changing potential in the fight against spam and other forms of e-mail abuse," said Dave Lewis, vice president with StrongMail Systems, a member of the coalition and a company that provides software for service providers.

Nearly 80 percent of users surveyed said they use the "report spam" button when they don't know the sender, while 20 percent said they used it as a quick way to remove their address from a mailing list.

E-mail users typically decide whether to click on the "report spam" or "junk" button based on the address and the subject line without opening the actual message, the survey found.

"That is, I think, a wake up call for marketers," said Trevor Hughes, executive director of the coalition. "You are getting deleted before it is even opened."

Nearly all users said they would use an unsubscribe button if it was built directly into their e-mail program. Likewise, users believe there should be a "report fraud" button.

Lewis said up to now, the Internet service providers have relied on proxies for the voice of consumers' content filters, blacklists and the like in determining e-mail that is wanted.

"The problem with this approach is that unwanted e-mail still bleeds through and legitimate e-mail gets caught up in the filters, impacting the trustworthiness and reliability of the e-mail medium," he said.

Charles Stiles, who helps manage the billions of e-mails that come through AOL's system, said a tool such as the "report spam" button benefits all.

"It's a win for the consumers because they don't have to see the messages, it's a win for the (Internet service providers) because we don't have to store it, manage it and process it, and it's a win for the sender because they don't have to pay for all the bandwidth and processing to send it," Stiles said.

AOL was one of the first Internet service providers to include a "report spam" button. Now AOL, whose entire worldwide mail operation goes through one system, blocks 1.5 billion to 2 billion unwanted e-mails a day, or 80 to 85 percent of all e-mail that crosses its wires.

The survey was accurate to within 2.5 percent, according to the coalition.

Spam Causing Headaches for Legit Marketers

Despite the growing number of antivirus, antispyware, and antimalware options flooding the market, Internet users are crying out for additional spam-fighting tools.

So says an e-mail-management survey released by the E-Mail Sender and Provider Coalition (ESPC) in conjunction with market research firm Ipsos. The implications could spell headaches for legitimate e-mail marketers.

More than 80 percent of the 2,200 online users surveyed said they report spam or use unsubscribe options, but about 90 percent would still like to see an unsubscribe tool in their e-mail applications. What's more, about 80 percent said they wanted a "report fraud" button in their e-mail clients to earmark suspicious messages.

ESPC Executive Director Trevor Hughes said the report provides actionable information for both the sending and receiving community.

"Today's consumer is educated about e-mail and, according to the results, very willing to use the functions available to them to manage their e-mail and to provide feedback about how they manage unwanted e-mail," he said in a statement. "The industry as a whole should listen to their needs to ensure e-mail is viewed with trust and acceptance."

The survey results have implications for both e-mail senders and receivers, but could mean new practices for e-mail marketers, especially with IronPort reporting that spam has increased more than 100 percent since October 2005, and worldwide spam volumes are now estimated at 63 billion messages each day.

The ESPC report suggested that senders should ensure recipients recognize them by the information in both the "From" and "Subject" lines of the e-mails. ESPC also discovered that 53 percent of survey respondents would be more likely to open and read e-mail if the sending company displayed a certified icon in the e-mail program.

"These survey results validate the fact that e-mail senders must constantly monitor both unsubscribe and complaint rates in order to carefully manage their reputation with recipients and ISPs," Ben Isaacson, privacy and compliance leader for CheetahMail, said in a statement.

John Levine, cochair of the Internet Research Task Force's antispam research group, and author of "Internet For Dummies," said the enormous volumes of spam has made recipients skeptical of any message that arrives via e-mail.

"Spam hasn't completely poisoned e-mail, but legitimate advertisers do have to try harder to make it clear that not only is this the e-mail you asked for but this is the e-mail you want," Levine said.

He also noted that e-mail marketers who use sweepstakes and contests as a means to get e-mail addresses that they can share with partners might find

a blight on their reputation.

PayPal Asking E-mail Services To Block Messages

PayPal, the Internet-based money transfer system owned by eBay, is trying to persuade e-mail providers to block messages that lack digital signatures, which are aimed at cutting down on phishing scams, a company attorney said Tuesday.

So far, no agreements have been reached, but the idea is one that PayPal would like to see from other e-commerce businesses, said Joseph E. Sullivan, PayPal's associate general counsel, at the International E-Crime Congress in London.

An agreement with, for example, Google for its Gmail service could potentially stop spam messages that look legitimate and bypass spam filters.

PayPal is using several technologies to digitally sign its e-mails now, including DomainKeys, Sullivan said. DomainKeys, a technology developed by Yahoo Inc., enables verification of the sender and integrity of the message that's sent.

PayPal is one of the most highly spoofed brands, with fraudsters sending out spam to lure vulnerable users to look-a-like Web sites where their log-in details and passwords are collected and abused for profit.

Once a hacker has gained control of a PayPal account, it's possible to send money to other PayPal accounts or purchase goods. PayPal has introduced rules to counter fraud, such as limits on how much money can be transferred. PayPal also compensates users who've had their accounts hijacked, Sullivan said.

But the phishing problem is getting worse than when he started working for eBay five years ago, Sullivan said.

Last week, Sullivan said he got a call from his father, who said he'd fell prey to a phishing scam. While spam filtering technologies have improved and awareness around phishing is rising, users tend to be the weakest point, falling for sometimes very convincing social engineering tricks.

"I think one lesson we've learned is that education isn't going to stop this," Sullivan said. "Phishing attacks are too good now. Every company that does business on the Internet is being targeted by phishing scams now."

The number of phishing sites is also rising. A report released last week by the Anti-Phishing World Group, a consortium of vendors and government agencies, said the number of fraudulent Web sites in January reached an all-time high of 29,930.

More Evidence Of U.S. As Malware Capital

Contrary to beliefs that overseas crime networks and unemployed computer

programmers in Eastern Europe remain the leading sources of virus code on the Internet, new research supports the growing perception that the United States is producing greater volumes of malware code than any other region of the planet.

According to security hardware maker Finjan's latest Web Security Trends Report - which analyzes data collected by the San Jose-based firm over the first three months of 2007 - more than 80 percent of the Web sites it found to be distributing malicious code were hosted on servers located in the U.S.

Although Finjan officials concede that much of the malware distributed by those sites may indeed be written and controlled by hackers operating outside of the U.S., the results indicate that efforts by legislators and law enforcement officials to crack down on illegal computing activity in the nation may not yet be succeeding.

According to the Q1 Finjan report, published on March 26, the United Kingdom ranked second in the list of countries hosting infected sites, accounting for roughly 10 percent, followed by Canada, Germany, and Italy. Noticeably absent from the top of the rankings are Russia and China, which have been widely perceived in recent years as leading sources of malware worldwide.

Finjan's results jibe with rival Symantec's latest Internet Security Threat Report - released earlier this month - which also maintains that attacks are increasingly emanating from sources in the United States. Symantec's research, which focused on all types of threats, not just Web-based attacks, reported that the U.S. is the source of about 31 percent of all malware and phishing schemes.

The reason why so many threats are coming from sites hosted in the U.S. and other relatively wealthy nations - most of which have stricter laws in place to combat such efforts than their developing neighbors - is simple, said Yuval Ben-Itzhak, chief technology officer at Finjan.

No matter what region the code writers live in, he said, attackers are flocking to markets where the most money is changing hands to carry out their crimeware schemes, and increasingly doing so by hijacking legitimate URLs to pass out their work.

"If you look back at many reports over the last few years, the perception has been that the malware is coming from Russia and other areas where laws are fewer and harder to enforce, but when we analyzed the live end-user content, we realized that a vast majority of malware was coming from servers in the U.S. where there are advanced laws and practices," Ben-Itzhak said.

The upside of the issue is that security researchers can take action when they find malware URLs that are based in the U.S. by reporting them to authorities and applying pressure to the companies hosting the sites to take them offline.

For the most part, the malware delivery pages are supported by cheap hosting companies that don't appear to closely monitor their behavior, Ben-Itzhak said. But an even more alarming trend is the high number of attacks being passed along to end-users via seemingly legitimate sites.

In many of those cases, the attacks are being served up as advertisements that site operators may not even recognize as malware sources, making the

situation even harder to fight.

"It's very clear that a lot of malware is coming from advertisements, and it's difficult to track where the code is originating because of the layers of ad systems, aggregators and agents that work together to create and distribute this content," Ben-Itzhak said. "There are so many third parties pushing ads to these sites, and there is no official process among these parties for seeking out the bad code."

A high-profile example of this type of attack was being distributed on a banner ad posted to social networking site MySpace.com in July 2006, which specifically attempted to use a security flaw in Microsoft Windows to infect Web surfers with spyware.

Finjan's report indicates a trend of new efforts to spread malware using Web pages that have been filtered by automatic translation services, which are typically used by people to read content written in foreign languages.

Because the translation services don't scan for threats, and are often distributed in cooperation with known sources such as news sites or search engines, attackers can use the systems to sneak infected links through to end-users without tipping off security applications that look for unknown content.

"The translation service sends a link that looks fine but the malware is still in there," Ben-Itzhak said. "This is another reason why people need real-time dynamic scanning for protection, because it's so hard to tell what you might actually be looking at these days."

Third Time No Charm for XXX Domain

The Internet's agency for overseeing domain names on Friday rejected a proposal for creating a voluntary domain ending in .xxx. The 9-5 vote to block the plan is the third time the agency has decided against some form of the proposal.

The Board of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), meeting in Lisbon, voted against a request by ICM Registry to create the .xxx top-level domain (TLD) for adult sites.

"This decision was the result of very careful scrutiny and consideration of all the arguments," ICANN Chairman Dr. Vint Cerf said in a statement. "That consideration has led a majority of the Board to believe that the proposal should be rejected."

ICM President and Chief Executive Stuart Lawley said in a statement that his Florida-based company "was extremely disappointed" by this most recent rejection. The proposal had initially been presented by ICM nearly seven years ago.

"It is not supportable for any of the reasons articulated by the board," he said, adding that the vote "ignores the rules ICANN itself adopted for the RFP (request for proposal), and makes a mockery of ICANN bylaws' prohibition of unjustifiable discriminatory treatment." He reportedly said that a lawsuit was "likely."

Larry Walters, a Florida attorney with extensive experience in First

Amendment and online adult issues, had expected ICANN to approve the new top-level domain.

"Any other TLD with this amount of supporting material," he said in an interview before the vote, "would have been approved a long time ago. The contract being proposed by ICM Registry is well within the range of other TLD contracts."

The multiyear effort to create voluntary, adult site .xxx domains has been a controversial one. Some Board members have expressed concern over whether ICANN, by approving such a domain, could find itself in the content-regulation business.

ICANN board member Steve Goldstein said in Friday's meeting that, if passed, the resolution would mean that the agency would need to "assume ongoing management and oversight roles regarding the content." ICANN defines itself as the agency "responsible for the global coordination of the Internet's system of unique identifiers," not as a manager or definer of content.

ICM's Lawley criticized this concern over content management, saying that ICANN itself put those sections into the proposal during negotiations.

There is opposition to the idea among the adult Web site industry. Some have said that the .xxx domain, even if voluntary, would create an online ghetto that could more easily be controlled and isolated by governments or others. Religious and other groups also oppose the domain as a way to legitimize adult sites and make them easier to find.

Because the .xxx domain would be voluntary, questions have been raised as to whether parents and teachers would actually be able to block all such sites.

After its initial proposal was tabled and effectively rejected in 2000, largely because of ICANN's concern about becoming a content regulator, ICM resubmitted it in 2004 with provisions to handle any regulation issues outside of ICANN.

ICANN's board rejected that proposal in mid-2006, expressing concern that the language was vague and that ICANN would end up having to step in as a regulator. The newest proposal, rejected Friday, was the result of negotiations between ICANN and ICM to clarify enforcement.

Online Fraud Runs Rampant In The UK

One in 10 Internet users in the United Kingdom was a victim of online fraud last year, according to an official survey of 2,400 people, who were asked about their online surfing habits, level of security protection, and encounters with fraud and theft.

Approximately 6 percent had been hit by fraud while shopping online, 4 percent saw "general fraud," and 3 percent were victims of crime related to banking and credit cards.

The survey was done by YouGov for Get Safe Online, a group created by law enforcement, private companies, and the government. One of the most notable aspects of the project was the discovery that many users did not

take basic steps to protect themselves online, such as installing antispyware software.

About one-fifth of those surveyed said they had replied to spam messages, and 10 percent had clicked on a Web site link within a spam e-mail. About 25 percent said most of their online security passwords were the same, and five percent used the same password for every site.

The survey is indicative of the type of efforts that are being put together throughout the world to increase user awareness, said Ron O'Brien, senior security analyst at security firm Sophos.

"There are an increasing number of campaigns and Web sites geared toward trying to preserve the integrity of the Internet browsing experience," he noted. "The effort is being underwritten by banks, and makers of operating systems, like Microsoft. It's in their best interest for users to be informed."

It is probable that more funds will be put toward surveys like the one done in the UK, and toward user-education initiatives that target younger users in particular, O'Brien said.

"Younger people have lifestyles that have taken on an electronic element; they're much more inclined toward technology," he said. "Teaching these users is a huge undertaking, but it's vitally important for making sure that e-commerce survives."

As more organizations band together to fight the growing threats, malware writers are becoming more savvy, O'Brien said. Realizing that users have become wary of attachments, many fraudsters are now using links within an e-mail or trying social engineering to draw users to malicious sites.

For example, malware writers are aware that many incoming college students will be signing up for online bank accounts for the first time, so the number of phishing attempts in August and September spikes, compared to the rest of the year.

These efforts can strike any user, O'Brien noted, and it is likely that Mac and Linux users will have to become more aware of security issues that are related more to their surfing habits than to their systems. "Social engineering doesn't discriminate between operating systems, or countries," said O'Brien. "Everyone is at risk."

Hackers Build Private IM

Hackers have built their own encrypted IM (instant-message) program to shield themselves from law enforcement trying to spy on their communication channels.

The application, called CarderIM, is a sophisticated tool hackers are using to sell information such as credit-card numbers or e-mail addresses, part of an underground economy dealing in financial data, said Andrew Moloney, business director for financial services for RSA, part of EMC Corp., during a presentation at the International e-crime Congress in London on Wednesday.

CarderIM exemplifies the increased effort hackers are making to obscure

their activities while continuing to use the Internet as a means to communicate with other criminals. "They're even investing in their own custom tools, their own places to work," Moloney said.

CarderIM's logo is humorous: two overlapping half suns in the same red-and-yellow tones as MasterCard International Inc.'s logo. The name, CarderIM, is a reference to the practice of "carding," or converting stolen credit-card details into cash or goods.

Often, the hackers who obtain credit-card numbers aren't interested in trying to convert the data into cash. But other people are. On the Internet, the two can meet. But the data buyers and sellers are constantly on the lookout for the "rippers" - security experts or police who are gathering data on them, Moloney said.

It's not known how widely CarderIM is being used, but its distribution appears to be limited, Moloney said. Searches through Google uncover a few passing but incomplete references to the program. It's also not easy to find a copy of it.

"To get ahold of it [CarderIM] you need to be part of one of the trusted groups, which we have agents within," Moloney said.

During his presentation, Moloney showed a screenshot of an advertisement for CarderIM, which addressed the need to "secure the scene." The application supposedly uses encrypted servers that are "offshore" and does not record IM conversations.

Hackers may have needed a more secure IM application, since most of the free ones, such as ICQ, transmit messages in clear text, which can be intercepted, Moloney said.

"They know that we watch and listen," Moloney said.

Researchers Untangle The Junk Web

You search for something and click on one of the first returned links. But it's a junk Web page, filled with nothing but low-end ads that might or might not relate to your search.

It's more than an annoyance. It prevents users from finding what they need, and blocks valid businesses from getting their messages across. These sites are the virtual equivalent of billboards blocking your view from the highway when you're trying to find a gas station.

A new technical study released late last week by researchers from Microsoft and the University of California at Davis (UCD) indicate that there are only a handful of operators generating these pages, and that there might be technical methods to minimize their impact.

The complete study, by Yi-Min and Ming Ha from Microsoft Research and Yuan Niu and Hao Chen from UCD, will be presented in May at an international Web conference in Alberta, Canada.

According to the study, a small group of as few as three operators create most of the false "doorway pages" on the Internet to attract spiders from search engines, thus gaining higher rankings on search results. Search

engines are continually changing tactics to avoid such search engine spam, but the spamming can still be effective. After clicking from a search engine to one of these sites, the user sees a page with lots of ad links and nothing else.

The creators of the doorway pages, according to the report, work with a few Web hosting companies and advertising systems. The authors indicate that their research shows most of the junk pages are served from just two Web hosting companies, and as many as 68 percent of the ads were from just three advertising syndicators.

The researchers found that search words such as "drugs" or "ring tone" returned results with up to 30 percent of the links being junk pages. The density of ad-only junk Web pages was 11 percent per 1,000 search keywords.

However, the researchers also found that only two blocks of IP addresses are used to attract search engines and deliver the spam ad content, which might provide a means to address the problem.

"Ultimately, it is advertisers' money that is funding the search-spam industry," their paper states, "which is increasingly cluttering the Web with low-quality content and reducing web users' productivity."

They also report that some blog-hosting services are teeming with fake doorway pages. They found that blogspot.com, owned by Microsoft competitor Google, had more such pages than any other hosting service.

One of the hosting companies cited in the report, ISPrime in New York, said that the junk pages were traced to a single customer, who was violating the company's acceptable-use policy. ISPrime said that, as a result of this report, it has discontinued its relationship with the unnamed customer.

The paper, "Spam Double-Funnel: Connecting Web Spammers with Advertisers," and related information, is available at research.microsoft.com/SearchRanger/.

=~==~==

Atari Online News, Etc. is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.